

WISCONSIN FOREST MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

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Chapter 6

CULTURAL RESOURCES

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CULTURAL RESOURCES



Figure 6-1: Indian burial mounds are a cultural resource that can be found in many Wisconsin forested areas. Although not as large as some, this mound is easily spotted because the understory has been removed. Other mounds may not be as easily detected when forest operations are conducted.

Forest Management for the Protection of Cultural Resources

This chapter of the guidelines was developed to provide landowners, loggers and resource managers with an increased awareness of cultural resources and recommendations on how to protect them during forest management activities. Those involved in managing forestlands need to understand that:

- Cultural resources are scarce and nonrenewable.
- Good forestland management is compatible with the protection of cultural resources.

There is a growing recognition that cultural resources have value and should be wisely managed. Cultural resources represent parts of an inheritance shared by all people. This heritage is of fundamental value to modern-day societies. Cultural resources often possess spiritual, scientific and other values that are weighed differently by different cultures. Today the management of cultural resources is a necessary component of land stewardship.

What Cultural Resources Are

Cultural resources include historic structures, archaeological sites, cemeteries, and traditional-use areas. Together, they represent roughly 13,000 years of human occupation in Wisconsin – from the end of the last ice age to the present day. Prehistoric cultural resources reflect the activities of Indian people prior to initial French contact in 1634. Since the first written records of Wisconsin began at that time, 1634 marks the beginning of the historic period. To be considered important, a cultural resource has to be at least 50 years old. Types of cultural resources include:

- **Historic Structures**
 - Houses, barns and outbuildings
 - Lime kilns
 - Bridges and railroad trestles
 - Schools and churches
 - Stores and office buildings
 - Mills and factories
- **Cemeteries**
 - Platted cemeteries
 - Family cemeteries and individual graves
 - Burial mounds
- **Archaeological Sites**
 - Campsites and villages
 - Caves and rock shelters
 - Quarries and flintknapping workshops
 - Large animal kill and butchering stations
 - Ridged fields and other types of garden beds
 - Enclosures and earthworks
 - Fish weirs
 - Rock art sites
 - Ruins of trading posts and homesteads
 - Shipwrecks
- **Traditional-use Areas**
 - Sugar bushes
 - Medicine gathering areas
 - Sacred springs
 - Ceremonial sites



Figure 6-2: This millstone was found near the site of a grist mill that burned to the ground in the early 20th-century.

Economics of Cultural Resource Management (CRM)

Economically, CRM will not usually pay for itself, but some forest landowners will discover that reserved and protected cultural resources can be financial assets.

- Cultural resource conservations often contribute to soil, water and wildlife habitat conservation measures.
- The return on investment in the preservation, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of above-ground cultural resources is often reflected in increased resale values, and may be used as an effective tool for developing a sense of corporate or community identity that encourages new investment.
- A growing number of federal and state laws provide financial incentives for preserving and protecting cultural resources. For example, through conservation easements, landowners may qualify for a federal income tax deduction or property tax credits.

Potential Impacts

In general, cultural resources are fragile. Many archaeological deposits lie within a few inches of the ground surface. Hence, even very shallow ground disturbance can destroy the context of artifacts or features such as the dirt floors of ancient houses. Threats range from natural forces (e.g., erosion, flooding, weathering, and fire) to human action (e.g., logging, agriculture, mining, land development, and vandalism). Potentially damaging effects to cultural resources resulting from forestland management activities include:

- Soil disturbance and/or compaction
- A change in the vegetation that is part of a traditional-use area
- Damage to above-ground features

Cultural Resource Management (CRM) and the Law

The legal basis for CRM is rooted in federal and state legislation concerned with natural resource conservation and environmental protection going back to the early

1900s. The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended, is the centerpiece of the national historic preservation program. It established the National Register of Historic Places and provides for State and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers to implement the national preservation program. Section 106 of NHPA requires that federal agencies consider the effects of their activities on cultural resources. Federal law applies whenever activity takes place on federal land, will use federal funds, or will require a federal permit.

The Wisconsin Field Archeology Act requires state agencies to contact the Wisconsin Historical Society if the agency's actions may impact an archaeological site, burial site or historic structure listed in cultural resource inventories. State law applies whenever the activity is on state-owned land, will use state funds, or requires a state permit. However, timber harvesting is exempt from review unless new logging roads are to be constructed.

State law affords special protection to burial sites, regardless of age or land ownership (including private lands). All human burials are afforded the same legal protection as platted cemeteries.



Figure 6-3: On this 1,000-year-old Indian village site, archaeological deposits lie only six to 10 inches below the ground surface, and harm can easily be done by very shallow ground disturbance.



Figure 6-4: Few abandoned buildings from the 19th-century are as intact as this old log house, sometimes found in forested areas of Wisconsin. You are more apt to find rotted wood and a cellar depression.

Cultural Resource Inventories

The Wisconsin Historical Society maintains an inventory of archaeological and burial sites as well as historic structures reported to their office. However, since most of the state has never been formally surveyed, unreported cultural resources likely outnumber those listed in their inventories. Archaeological sites are more apt to be inventoried if they have been plowed, exposing artifacts on the field surface, or if they have above-ground features such as burial mounds or piles of logging camp refuse. Access to archaeological and burial site inventories is restricted to protect sites from looting, discourage trespass, and show respect for sites that some regard as sacred. The statewide inventory of known historic structures is openly available through the Wisconsin Historical Society's web site.

Assessing Cultural Resources

If a forest management site has not been previously surveyed for cultural resources, individuals may conduct their own assessment of the area's potential. One might begin by checking existing maps, air photos and printed historical information, and then assess the landscape. The following have high potential for cultural resources:

- Current shorelines or terraces adjacent to lakes, rivers or streams, and shorelines of ancient lakes and old river channels
- Junctions of waterbodies, including river junctions, and lake inlets and outlets
- Peninsulas or points of land along a shoreline, including islands
- Good places to camp, including areas where people camp now
- Areas adjacent to fish spawning beds, good fishing spots and wild rice beds
- Transportation routes (e.g., old trails, roads or portages)

Field Identification of Cultural Resources

During a walk-over inspection of the management area, in preparation for a timber sale, forest managers and landowners may discover unrecorded cultural resources. Some things to look for are:

- High spots offering a panoramic view
- Unusual natural features
- Surface artifacts (check bare spots, tree tip-ups and cut banks)
- Surface features
 - Cellar and well holes
 - Cement or asphalt slabs
 - Fieldstone foundations
 - Miscellaneous building materials (bricks, roofing materials, plaster, and stucco)
 - Metal well pipes
 - Earthen berms and trenches
 - Shallow depressions (such as graves or ricing pits)
- Milled lumber (such as boards suitable for burial crosses, spirit houses or building construction)
- Domestic or exotic plants (including lilac bushes, fruit trees and daylilies)
- Old roads, trails and portages (especially where two come together)
- Trash dumps containing antique items or jumbo-sized tin cans
- Standing structures and buildings

Assessing Management Alternatives

- **Protection by law.** If the pre-field review indicates the project area contains a site protected by law (such as a burial site), further action will be determined by statute or regulations.
- **Identification as a low-sensitivity site.** If no cultural resources have been recorded and the pre-field review and walk-over inspection yielded no indications of important cultural resources, the site would have low sensitivity. Proceed with the management activity.
- **Identification as a high-sensitivity site.** If cultural resources are known to exist or if the pre-field review and walk-over inspection indicate their presence, the site has high sensitivity. In this case, it is recommended that the forest manager avoid the sensitive area or bring in a cultural resource management professional to conduct a survey.

When Accidental Discovery Occurs

Unrecorded cultural resources may be discovered during operations. Guidelines for proceeding depend on the nature of the discovery.

- In the case of human burials, if such discovery occurs, temporary suspension of operations in the vicinity of the discovery is required. **If a human burial site is accidentally discovered, contact the Burial Sites Preservation Office at the Wisconsin Historical Society.**
- For other types of cultural resources, such as archaeological artifacts, temporary suspension is not required, but is recommended. Suspending operations in the immediate vicinity of the cultural resource will provide time to contact a cultural resource professional, or develop plans to apply appropriate guidelines to avoid or mitigate potential effects.
- Documentation of cultural resources discovered during forest management activities is not required. However, landowners and operators are encouraged to make a written record of their discoveries, and share that information with the Office of the State Archaeologist at the Wisconsin Historical Society.